

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR WATER SYSTEMS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A MAJOR HURRICANE

September 16, 2003

A water supplier should prepare for a major hurricane by taking the following steps:

Before a hurricane

1. update your emergency contact list;
2. test your access system/equipment and ensure it is in good working order;
3. place operating personnel on call and review emergency procedures;
4. provide the NJ State Police with 24 hour contact information for your organization (operation center) in the event a travel restriction is imposed;
5. provide an emergency response personnel list to the operator on 24 hour call;
6. ensure that all supplies, including water treatment chemicals and fuels, are fully stocked and secured to the maximum extent possible;
7. test auxiliary power generators under load to ensure they are in good working order;
8. fill storage tanks, especially elevated tanks, to the extent possible and maintain levels as much as possible during the hurricane emergency;
9. *for surface water systems*, set criteria in which you may want to curtail production to meet turbidity standards and set criteria for the issuance of a Boil Water Advisory (based on turbidity levels in filtered water);
10. prepare Water Conservation messages and Boil Water Advisories for distribution, if needed;

During the hurricane

11. monitor all critical infrastructure components for signs of trouble;
12. monitor radio stations serving your area for emergency public service announcements;
13. ensure all emergency responding personnel carry a company issued identification with picture and carry the 24 hour contact number in the event they are pulled over (critical for water utilities serving multiple municipalities with different law enforcement agencies);
14. should a critical component of the system fail or produce water that could be of questionable quality, quickly decide whether it's safe for your customers to continue to use the water for potable purposes. If uncertain, contact the DEP, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water or the Regional Office of Water Compliance and Assistance during working hours. During non-working hours consult with your water company's water quality specialist or health officer. If still in doubt, you need to declare a water emergency and most likely inform your customers to be on a Boil Water Advisory. If you declare a water emergency you need to immediately contact (1) your local emergency management officer and (2) the NJDEP hotline at 1-877-927-6337 (1-877-WARN DEP). If your utility is regulated by the BPU, you should contact the BPU at their 24 hour emergency contact number.
15. if a non-critical component of your system fails or is threatened by flood and you are still capable of maintaining service, remove that component from service and report to the DEP the next business day.

After the Hurricane

16. inspect/assess critical infrastructure for damage;
17. check microbiological water quality before reactivating any flooded well station;
18. report any service interruption or any significant problems that have or could have impacted water quality to the appropriate state agencies;
19. collect additional microbiological samples from the distribution system to assess water quality to determine if there was an undetected problem.

Distribution of this advisory is done via email and is limited to those water systems that have an email address on file with us. Please share this information with other water systems that may not have received this advisory directly. Should you have any questions about this advisory, contact the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water at 609-292-5550.